Suicide Awareness
RESPONSIVE AND DEDICATED
Suicide Awareness 2008
U.S.ARMY
SUICIDE AWARENESS

We can make a difference

Leaders have the power and responsibility to protect their Soldiers on and off the battlefield. This includes recognizing uncharacteristic and suicidal behaviors. Effective suicide prevention requires everyone in the unit to be aware of the risk factors for suicide and know how to respond.

Commanders, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and supervisors must lead the way. Through education we can increase awareness and begin to rid the Army of the stigma that is too often attached to seeking help.

Distress can lead to the development of unhealthy behaviors. People closest to the Soldier (fellow Soldiers, family, friends) are in the best position to recognize changes due to distress and to provide support.

If a Soldier seems suicidal, the time to take action is NOW.

Take a moment to review the following slides. Our Soldiers are killing themselves, and one suicide is one too many!

BG Steve Jones
Commander
Pacific Regional Medical Command

U.S.ARMY

SUICIDE AWARENESS

If Your Buddy is in Pain
Help Your Buddy!
You are a Warrior and a member of a team,You will never leave a fallen comrade!
U.S.ARMY
SUICIDE AWARENESS

Intervention

A

Ask your buddy

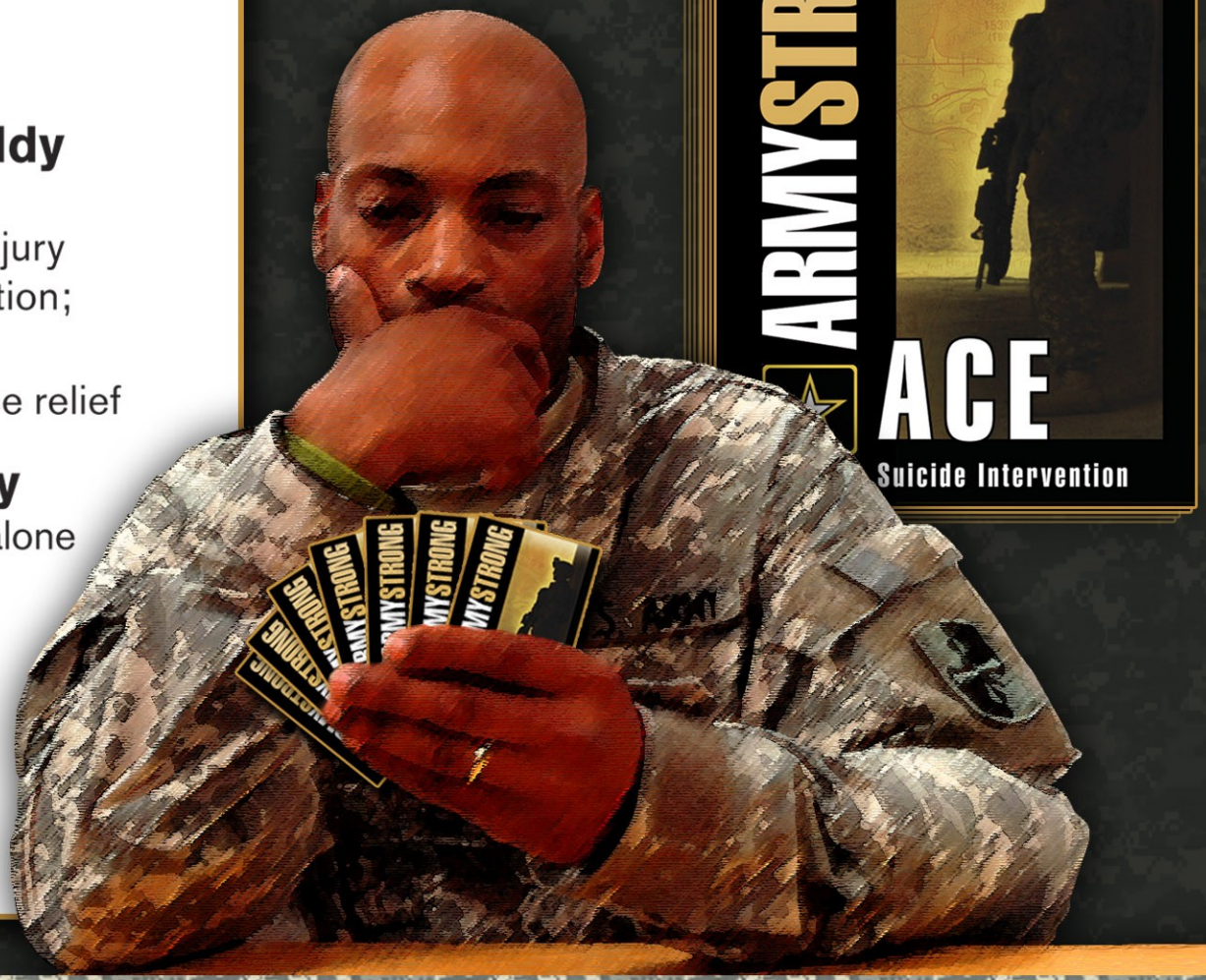
- Have the courage to ask the question, but stay calm
- Ask the question directly, e.g. Are you thinking of killing yourself?

Care for your buddy

- Remove any means that could be used for self-injury
- Calmly control the situation; do not use force
- Actively listen to produce relief

Escort your buddy

- Never leave your buddy alone
- Escort to the chain of command, a Chaplain, a behavioral health professional, or a primary care provider



U.S.ARMY

SUICIDE AWARENESS

Suicide Vignette #1

PVT Smith was a 22 year-old single, black male who was three months into his first deployment. While surfing MySpace.com, he learned that his deployed girlfriend was involved in another relationship. After that, PVT Smith began to abuse alcohol. One evening, PVT Smith refused to go to the gym with his buddies, which was unusual. That night, Private Smith shot himself to death.

Can you list the warning signs?

Given that you know PVT Smith, and are aware of his distress, which of the following would be the best response.

1. Wait and see how things go because it's not a good idea to interfere in another Soldier's personal matters. He might get angry.
2. If I knew about his girlfriend problems, I would talk to him to see if he was alright. I would ask him if he felt suicidal. If he said yes, I would escort him to see the commander.
3. Because of his alcohol abuse, I would inform the Platoon SGT that something was troubling PVT Smith i.e., he was drinking too much. I would suggest that the Platoon SGT talk to him.

Suicide Vignette #2

SPC Rodriquez was a 27 year-old, single, Hispanic male, who had previously deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan. SPC Rodriquez recently received an Article 15 resulting in loss of pay and rank. His commander referred him for a lateral transfer and cross training. It was known that SPC Rodriquez was very frustrated and angry about the command referral and reassignment to a new unit that was deploying in a week. Ordinarily, he was very quiet and introverted, but had a good rapport with other platoon members. He was a "video gamer " who spent more time gaming and less time with friends. SPC Rodriquez was missing for 2 days before he was discovered dead by a buddy. SPC Rodriquez had hanged himself in the basement of his quarters.

Can you list the warning signs?

Given that you know SPC Rodriquez, and are aware of his distress, which of the following would be the best response.

1. Two deployments are tough. He probably received the Article 15 for complaining about going on another deployment. I prefer not to be involved with someone who received an Article 15. He was probably trouble.
2. In our unit, we keep good track of our unit personnel. If someone is missing, we look for the Soldier immediately to see if he or she is okay.
3. Realizing that SPC Rodriquez is a quiet person, I would talk to him after the transfer to see if he was alright. Given all his issues, I would recommend that he speak with the Chaplain.

Suicide Vignette #3

PFC Morgan was a 19 year-old, single, white male, 11B, who had deployed twice to Iraq with significant combat exposure. PFC Morgan had difficulties learning new Soldiers' skills. Because of his slowness, he was often ridiculed by peers and leadership. Everyone believed that he accepted the treatment as good natured ribbing. Prior to his death, he gave away some personal belongings. About one day before his death, he also told a buddy that he had "had enough". This was interpreted as simple frustration. PFC Morgan was found dead in his car by carbon monoxide poisoning.

Can you list the warning signs?

Given that you know PFC Morgan, and aware of his distress, which of the following would be the best response.

1. If I had known he was angry about being "teased", I would talk to him to see if he was alright. I would ask him if he felt suicidal. If he said yes, I would convince him to see a behavioral health provider in the morning. After he made a commitment, I would tell him that I would pick him up the next day.
2. In the Army, people are always joking with each other. That's how we all deal with the stress. If you can't handle the ribbing, you should get out of the Army.
3. When I heard that he had had enough, I would immediately ask him if he was thinking of suicide. If he said yes, I would stay with him, and inform the chain of command. I would never leave him alone until he saw a helping provider.

Suicide Vignette #4

SPC Rhodes was a 25 year-old, single white female, 91W, who has deployed three different times: twice to Iraq and once to Afghanistan. During a current deployment, her TMC experienced a mass casualty in which SPC Rhodes watched several Soldiers from her unit die. She was neither well-liked nor disliked by others. She frequently talked about her boyfriend back home and their plans to marry. About a week before she died, she received a letter from her boyfriend indicating that he wanted to terminate their relationship. SPC Rhodes was discovered in her bunk dead

from a drug overdose.

Can you list the warning signs?

Given that you know SPC Rhodes, and are aware of her distress, which of the

following would be the best response.

1. " Dear John or Dear Joan" letters are common during deployments. It is best to wait and see how a Soldier will respond to such a letter. You don't want to ask intrusive questions unnecessarily because the Soldier could get angry.
2. If I had known about her boyfriend problems, I would have asked one of her girlfriends to talk to her. Girls relate better to each other. She would never tell a guy if she was suicidal.
3. Both the mass casualty and the loss of her boyfriend were concerns. I would talk to her to see if she was alright. As her buddy, I would make sure she talked to either the unit Chaplain or COSC team about her losses.

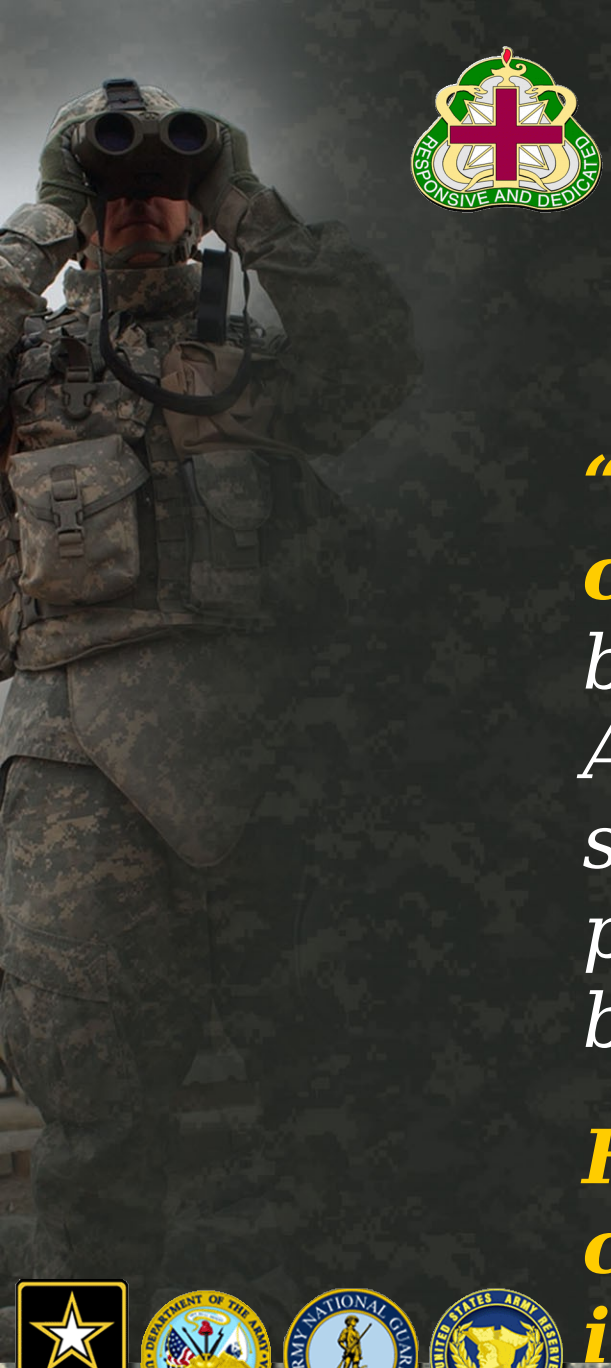
Suicide Vignette #5

SGT Jones was a 34 year-old, married white male, 13 B, who was six months into his first deployment. SGT Jones received a verbal counseling for not following proper risk assessment procedures which may have led to combat casualties. He declined mid-tour leave. One week before his death, he received an Article 15 for falling asleep while on guard duty. SGT Jones shot himself to death using his own military weapon.

Can you list the warning signs?

Given that you know SGT Jones, and are aware of his distress, which of the following would be the best response.

1. Being in a war zone, he should have lost his stripes. Falling asleep on guard duty is unacceptable.
2. It was apparent that SGT Jones had issues. I believe that another NCO should talk to him to see if he is alright. This is NCO business.
3. Leadership should have recognized that it is not usual for an NCO to get an Article 15. SGT Jones must have been experiencing personal problems. I would have recommended that he talk to behavioral health.



The Warrior Ethos statement

"I will never leave a fallen comrade" *refers to helping a buddy in mental distress also. A very large number of suicides could have been prevented by an attentive buddy.*

Helping a buddy takes courage and accepting help is a sign of strength.

Web-Based Resources

Behavioral Health News:

- ✓ **New York Agencies Partner to Help Returning Soldiers**
- ✓ **Wounded Help Break Ground on Psychological Health, TBI Center**

- ✓ **Army Expands Battlemind Training Visit Battlemind**
- ✓ **Mental Health Counseling and Security Clearances:** Mental Health counseling will not count against service members applying for Security Clearances.
- ✓ **Army Medicine Raises Mental Health Awareness with Programs to 'Get Connected'**

- ✓ **Videos for Children, Adolescents, Teens Cope with Deployed Parent**
  Watch, download, order videos and materials for ages 3-5, 6-11 & 12-18.
- ✓ **The Army's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Mild**

Resources

- ✓ Chain of Command
- ✓ Unit Chaplain
- ✓ Tripler Army Medical Center
  433-2737
- ✓ Hickam Air Force Base
  449-0176
- ✓ Pearl Harbor
  471-9002, Ext. 350
- ✓ Kaneohe Bay Marine Corps
  257-3365, Ext. 359
- ✓ Soldier Assistance Center
  433-8600
- ✓ Suicide Crisis Hotline
  832-3100
- ✓ VA National Suicide Hotline
  1-800-273-8255

SUICIDE AWARENESS